The Insufficiency of External Observances, without Purity of Heart:

A

SERMON

Preach'd at

BARBICAN,

AUGUST the Fourth, 1717.

By JOHN GALE, M.A. and D.P.

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TO

Mr. Joſeph Townſhend.

SIR,

WHEN *our Friends lead us into Actions which are beneficial to others, they lay on us the higheſt Honour of human Life, and bring us under the greateſt Obligations to themſelves; if therefore I am ſo happy as to do ſome ſervice to any by this Sermon, I am at leaſt equally bound with them to thank You, by whoſe Influence it was at firſt compos'd and preach'd, and is now offer'd to the World. Excuſe me, Sir, that I make this publick Acknowledgment, and that I take the liberty to ſay 'tis a very ſenſible Pleaſure to me to obſerve, that your generous Inclination to every thing which may advance the*

Common Good; your Affection for Truth, and Justice, and pure Religion; and your unshaken Zeal and Stedfastness in the Cause you have espous'd; have always made you more known and more useful than even all the Advantages of your flourishing Circumstances in the World; and that they will no doubt continue to draw on you the Esteem of all who have the Happiness of your Acquaintance.

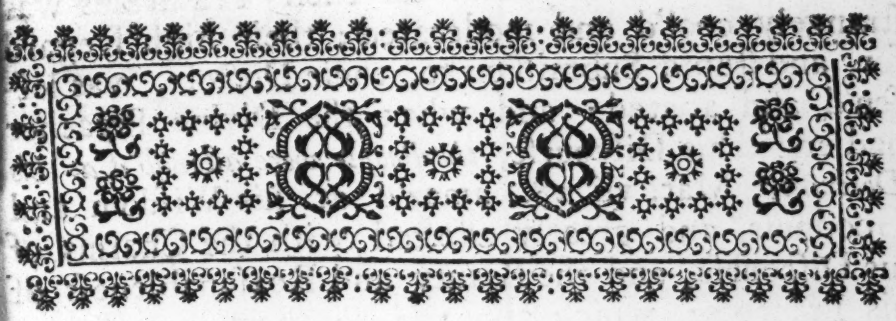
Permit me, Sir, to assure you, that nothing but the most sincere Respect makes me lay hold on this Opportunity, and at the same time heartily wish for a better, wherein more effectually to convince you how much, and how unfeignedly I am,

SIR,

Your most Obliged

Humble Servant,

J. GALE.



MATTH. V. 8.

Bleſſed are the Pure in Heart, for they ſhall ſee God.

THESE Words are part of our Saviour's moſt excellent Sermon upon the Mount, very oppoſite to the Traditions and Practices of the Scribes and Phariſees; and yet preach'd to a numerous Aſſembly of Perſons, who were much devoted to thoſe Teachers, or rather Corrupters of the Law. The *Jews* had been long taught to have their Wiſemen, as they call'd them, in high eſteem; and were told, that whoſoever contradicted his Teachers, did as bad as if he contradicted God himſelf; nay, by a Law of theirs, whoever refuſed to obey the Wiſemen was to be put to death. But notwithſtanding this Slavery of Mind they were under, and the Meanneſs of Spirit they muſt have thereby contracted; notwithſtanding the mighty Reverence they had for their ſpiritual Guides, and the unſpeakable Power of the Prejudices in which they had been educated: our Saviour preach'd this Sermon in direct oppoſition to thoſe Prejudices and thoſe Guides; and ſuch was the Excellency and Reaſonableneſs of the Matter of it, and ſuch the Force and Manner of his delivering it to them, as bore down all Oppoſition. Of the moſt

ſtiff

ſtiff and obſtinate, his Hearers became ſoft and pliable; their uſual fiery Zeal for their Traditions was ſtrangely cool'd and moderated; their high Regard for, and ſtupid Submiſſion to, their Doctors, was leſſen'd and abated: and when the Divine Preacher had ended his Diſcourſe, *the People were aſtoniſh'd at his Doctrine*, Mat. vii. 28. amaz'd at his Wiſdom and Goodneſs, and greatly affected with the Charms of his Diſcourſe, and the Beauty and Reaſonableneſs of his Precepts; which appear'd to them very ſtrong and evident, notwithſtanding they had been ſo long us'd to hear, with the profoundeſt Reſpect and Veneration, ſuch as underſtood very little of his Doctrine, and had taught them many things contrary to it. But this new Teacher taught them (*not as the Scribes* and Phariſees, who continually appeal'd to their Wiſemen, and thoſe of old time, confirming what they advanc'd by their Teſtimony; but he taught them) *as one having* an uncommon and more than ordinary *Authority, in demonſtration of the Spirit and of Power.*

OUR Lord, the better to anſwer the Deſign for which he came into the World, being ſent moſt immediately and firſt to the *Jews*, took a great deal of Care and Pains to rectify the Abuſes and Corruptions which then prevail'd among that People, and gave him ſuch juſt occaſion to complain, that they did *in vain worſhip* God, *teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*; laying aſide and rejecting the Commandments of God, to *keep* their *own Traditions*, thereby *making the Word of God of none effect*; Mark vii. 7——13. He very frequently inveighs againſt the Hypocriſy and Superſtition, the Blindneſs and Ignorance, nay the Irreligion and Immorality, not ſo much of the common People, as of their learned Scribes, their ſanctify'd Phariſees, and the Holy Order of Prieſts, who boaſted of a ſacred Character, to which they were a Reproach. Our Saviour continually ſet himſelf in oppoſition to theſe Men, as well knowing that moſt of the Errors and Corruptions of the

the common People take their rise chiefly from this Source: for it is very certain that the Teachers of the People are almost the sole Spring and Fountain-Head of all the Vertue or Vice which prevails amongst them. Accordingly in the 7th of *Mark* our Lord, after having reproached them with many of their Traditions, calls the People to him, and says, ver. 14. *Hearken unto me every one of you*; and so proceeds to shew them the Error of their Teachers. And thus likewise this Sermon, which, as far as appears, is the longest our Saviour ever preached, is pointed directly against several of the corrupt Glosses, and false Doctrines, and human Traditions, which were then generally received by the People, as being diligently advanced and enforced by their Teachers. Thus our Lord says to 'em, *ver.* 21. *Ye have heard that it was said*, and so forth; and then, *ver.* 22. adds, *But I say unto you*, and so on. The same kind of Opposition he again uses several times afterwards. Nay, he had so much contradicted the receiv'd Opinions of that time, that he thought it necessary to caution his Hearers against a Mistake they might on that account be ready to run into; and to assure 'em that his Doctrines, whatever they might think of 'em, did not at all tend to set aside the Law, but only to restore it to its native Purity and Simplicity, and to rescue it from the Misinterpretations and mischievous Abuses put upon it by their blind Guides: for *think not*, says he *ver.* 17. *that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil*; to establish, and confirm, and improve them in Truth and Righteousness: but you are not to think the false Glosses and Traditions of the Elders are the Law, or agreeable to it, or that by the Observation of those heavy Burdens which the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* impose upon you, you can be justify'd before God, and accounted Keepers of the Law. Be not deceiv'd, *for I say unto you, That except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the* Scribes *and* Pharisees, *ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; ver. 20.

I SAY these things here, concerning our Saviour's opposing the Notions of the *Jewish* Doctors, because this is the true Key to the understanding of our Saviour's whole Discourse, and (judiciously used) will let us into the true Meaning of the several Parts of this excellent Sermon. At present we are particularly to confine our selves to that part only which I read at first for my Text, in these words; *Blessed are the pure in Heart, for they shall see God.* And in order to come at their true full Sense and Meaning, it must be remember'd, that when God gave the Law to the *Jews* by his Servant *Moses*, to create in them the greater Awe and Reverence of his Person, and of the Purity and Holiness of his Nature and his Precepts, he gave several Rules and Laws to be observ'd concerning bodily Uncleannesses of divers kinds, from which all were to keep themselves free as much as might be; and if at any time they were polluted, they were to be cleansed and purified by certain Rites and Ceremonies which God appointed for that purpose. Great part of the Book of *Leviticus* is commonly enough known to be made up of Laws concerning these things: The greatest part of the 11th Chapter is taken up in distinguishing between those which were to be accounted clean or unclean Meats; and the whole 13th and 14th in prescribing several Rules and Laws concerning the Plague of Leprosy, and its Legal Purification both in the Bodies of Men, and in the Walls of their Houses. A great part of the 19th Chapter of the Book of *Numbers* contains the Laws and Manner of purifying from the Pollutions contracted by the Touch of one slain with a Sword in the open Fields, or a dead Body, or a Bone of a Man, or a Grave: and of the Legal Uncleanness of the Tent wherein any Man died, and of all Things and Persons therein at that time, or which should be brought in during the continuance of the dead Body there. There are also many Rules and Laws concerning the Purification and Dedication of the Holy Vessels, which were to be used in their Divine Service;

vice; and of the Priests, in order to their approaching to God and his Sanctuary. And all the People likewise were at certain times, upon some special and extraordinary Occasions, to be universally cleansed and purified before they could approach to God; for at the giving the Law, *Exod.* xix. 10. *the Lord said unto* Moses, *Go unto the People, and sanctify them—— and let them wash their Clothes, and be ready,——for—— the Lord will come down in the sight of all the People.* And so again when God was to lead the *Israelites* miraculously over *Jordan* at the beginning of *Joshua*'s Ministry, Joshua *said unto the People, Sanctify your selves, for to-morrow the Lord will do Wonders among you*; Josh.iii.5. These, with many other things of the like nature, were required of the *Jews* by Divine Authority, as what might signify to them, and tend to raise in their Minds suitable Notions and Acknowledgments of the transcendent Purity and Holiness of that God with whom they had to do, and their own Meanness and Impurity, and their Unworthiness to come into the Presence of so holy a Being. But perverting the Design of these things, they soon rested entirely in the bare external Performances, which is a more easy and showy sort of Religion, than that which is internal and spiritual, and consists in the Purity of the Heart, and Regularity of the Manners. Hence they became so excessively fond of these external Rites and Ceremonies, that tho they were already sufficiently numerous by Divine Appointment, yet by the addition of many other empty Fancies of their own, they so greatly increas'd their Number, that they grew into an immense Body: Of this sort were all those Washings of Pots, and Cups, and Beds, and brazen Vessels, and Tables; with which, and many other such like things, our Saviour reproaches them in *Mark* vii. They accounted themselves to be defiled by conversing with other Men, and therefore constantly wash'd themselves when they return'd from Market, or any publick Places of Resort: They also thought it a great Pollution to eat with un-

washen Hands, which they therefore very diligently avoided to do, *walking* strictly *according to the Tradition of the Elders:* but all, as our Savicur observes, to the setting *aside the Commandment of God*, Mark vii. 8. Which indeed is but the natural Consequence of this great Affection for Ceremonies, as has always been very evidently seen in all Churches in which Ceremonies have been countenanced. Their great Reverence and Regard to the Traditions of their Elders took up their Thoughts so much, that they had little time to spare for better things; and by their Diligence and Exactness in tithing *Mint, and Anise, and Cummin*, they were run into the Neglect, I might say the Contempt, of the *weightier Matters of the Law*, Mat. xxiii. 23. And thus becoming fonder of these things than of those which were better and more substantial, they substituted these in the room of true Religion; as our Saviour himself has noted in the 7th Chapter of St. *Mark*, and more largely in the 23d of *Matthew*, as well as in many other places.

THIS was the State of the *Jewish* Church at that time; these are the Men our Saviour opposes, and these the Practices of which he frequently complains, and to which he often opposes *Purity of Heart*. Thus when the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* found fault that his Disciples did not wash before they eat, after having censur'd their superstitious Washings, he calls to the misguided People, and assures them, *Mark* vii. 15. *There's nothing from without a Man, that entring into him can defile him; but*, ver. 20. *that which cometh out of the Man, that defileth the Man: for from within, out of the Heart of Man proceed evil Thoughts, Adulteries*, and the like; *all which evil things coming from* an impure Heart *within, defile the Man*, ver. 23. And so again in *Mat.* xxiii. 25, &c. he reproves the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* as Hypocrites, who took great care to make clean the Outside of the Cup and Platter, and diligently perform all their external Purifications and Cleansings, that so they might outwardly appear Righteous unto Men, but within were full of Extortion and Excess; or like

Sepulchres

Sepulchres full of dead Mens Bones, and all Uncleanness, they were full of Hypocrisy and Iniquity: but *thou blind Pharisee*, says he, *ver.* 26. learn of them, who not content with cleansing the Outsides of their Vessels, as if that made them thorowly clean, take more care of cleansing especially the Inside of *the Cup and Platter*; and do thou in like manner first cleanse and purify thy Heart and thy Affections, and then all thy Designs and Actions which flow from thence will be just and pure: This is superior to all thy external Purifications, and the only way to be truly clean and holy, and to become the proper Objects of God's Favour, and entitled to all the Blessings he will bestow on the true spiritual Seed of *Abraham*. So again in our Text, our Saviour, knowing that the Minds of the People were fill'd with Notions of the Necessity of the divers Washings requir'd and practis'd by the *Pharisees*, and the great Holiness they imagin'd to follow thereupon, took occasion to recommend to them Purity of Heart, as a thing far more excellent and advantageous than all external Purity: as if he had said, Think not that these Externals can avail you any thing, whatever stress your Teachers may lay on them; at best they are in themselves of very little consideration: but *blessed* indeed *are the pure in Heart, for they shall see God*; they are not only his true Worshippers here, and fit to be admitted into his Temple and Sanctuary, but they shall even be admitted into the Holy of Holies above the Heavens, into the Presence of the Almighty, and see and converse with him face to face.

But now having thus largely shewn that our Saviour in our Text opposes *Purity of Heart*, i. e. internal Religion, to external Rites and Ceremonies, and all outward Performances; it may not be amiss here to lay down and enlarge upon an Observation which naturally arises from hence; which is this:

THAT the most diligent and punctual Performance of the positive Institutions and external Parts of Religion, be

they otherwise ever so necessary and useful, are altogether useless and insignificant, without a suitable inward Disposition, and Purity of Heart and Mind. You ought not to think it strange that I propose this Observation to be enlarg'd on in a Christian Audience. It is true, considering things abstractedly and in themselves, it should seem very unnecessary; and I heartily wish it was so indeed, and that there was no occasion to discourse on this Subject, as to be sure there would not be, if the pure true Religion of the blessed Jesus could prevail in the World: whereas all who are, tho but little, conversant with Mankind, and acquainted with the present unhappy State of Christianity, know very well that pretended or weak Christians have given too much reason to the Preachers of the Gospel to treat this matter very largely: and it were to be wish'd they did it more frequently too, with proper Earnestness, and a due Concern for the Interest and unsullied Honour of our most holy Religion; that so at last a stop might be effectually put to a dangerous growing Mischief, a fatal Canker, which has not only spread it self over the whole face of Christianity, but has almost eat out its very Heart, and render'd it lifeless, foul and contemptible.

In the prosecution of the Subject I have at present pitch'd upon, I will take this Method:

I. I will shew you, that Christians do generally too much rest in the Performance of the external Parts of Religion. And,

II. I will prove to you the Truth of my Observation.

In the first place then, 'tis too plain and visible, that Christians do generally rest in the Performance of the external Parts of Religion. They are so far gone in Corruption, that they have substituted these things in the stead of Religion. They of the *Romish* Church are wholly taken up with the gaudy Pomp and Ceremonies, which their Vanity and Superstition,

ſtition, the Peoples Ignorance, and the Pride, Avarice, and Craft of their deſigning Prieſts have render'd very numerous. The Shewineſs and Pageantry of their ſolemn Proceſſions, and indeed of every part of their publick Worſhip; the pretended ſacred Character, and the great Power of the Prieſts; the Holineſs of their conſecrated Churches, Grounds, Altars, Shrines, Veſtments, Images, and the like; the pretended Uſefulneſs of Confeſſion, Abſolution, Penances, Pilgrimages, with numberleſs other ridiculous Fopperies, which are hardly fit to come under the name of *human* Inventions, make up the Religion, and are moſt at the heart of the Members of that Church, to the very great Reproach and Scandal of the Chriſtian Religion.

THE *Greek* Church has likewiſe overwhelmed and loſt the holy and pure Religion they receiv'd from the Apoſtles, in the ſame wide and fathomleſs Ocean of vain ſuperſtitious Forms, and Ceremonies, and Idolatry; they are indeed very ſtrict in the Obſervation of their Rituals, and all the Feaſts and Faſts, *&c.* which their Church impoſes on them, but all under ſuch a prodigious degree of Ignorance and Corruption, that even the Prieſts themſelves, after a moſt ſuperſtitious Obſervation of their Faſts, immediately give themſelves up to all manner of Exceſs and Riot; and in the actual Celebration of their holy Feaſts commonly, and without any Remorſe or Senſe of Guilt, make themſelves drunk for the Honour of God, and their Church, and their Saints, and even of St. *John the Baptiſt* too, whom they call the *Abſtemious.* Monſtrous! that ever Men who call themſelves Chriſtians, and are ſo ſuperſtitiouſly zealous for what they account Religion, ſhould by any means ſuffer themſelves to ſink into ſuch groſs Corruption and Irreligion, and be ſo blind as to be impos'd upon by that vile Abſurdity of becoming ſcandalouſly wicked out of pure Religion! And yet this, with the *Roman* Church, have extended themſelves over, and with their genuine Ignorance and Superſtition, as

with

with a thick black Cloud, have cover'd and involv'd in Darkness the far greater part of the Christian World. And tho it must be confess'd, that no inconsiderable part of *Europe* has very much reform'd itself from the gross Idolatry and Corruptions of these Churches; yet it is greatly to be lamented, that Externals are too much regarded and rely'd on even by these Reform'd Churches. Some have invented and introduc'd into their publick Worship divers Ceremonies, without any manner of real necessity, which at least seems to argue some Dependence on, and Expectation from the Performance of them; or however, if some think them useful, so far only as they may help to promote internal Religion, 'tis too certain that the Many have quite other Notions of the matter, who are very diligent to perform, or furiously zealous to defend and continue the use of these things, and for the sake of these only extol their particular Church, in opposition to all others, as perfect, holy, pure, primitive, and apostolical: while at the same time they have little regard to the Practice of Virtue and true Holiness in themselves or others, and take little or no care to reform and regulate their Lives, and to purge the Church of corrupt and even scandalously sinful Members. So long as a Warmth for Externals only is a sufficient Recommendation to the Communion of any Church, the Body of that Church will doubtless consist of Persons, who place the main of Religion in those Externals; and therefore how frequently do we see the warmest Zealots for Ceremonies spend their Strength and Zeal upon them, and become not only indifferent, but even very cold in regard to every thing else that's more substantial! they will not omit the religious and devout Performance of these things, even with Hearts full of Hatred, Revenge, and Malice towards such as cannot join with them therein; and when they return from the publick Service, how frequently do they give themselves up to Debauchery, Fury, Anger, and Party-Rage, to Drunkenness, Profaneness and Irreligion,

ligion, in all the other Parts of their Lives; a certain Demonstration that they place their Religion in these external Rites and human Compositions, which with so much Noise and Heat they uphold and impose.

But of these things some others are very sensible, and apt enough to complain, far more apt than they are to see and consider, that even they themselves too lie under the same Guilt: for don't too many take special care to shun the publick Churches, and reject the Forms and Ceremonies in use there, who at the same time are not so much afraid of the common Corruptions of the Profane? This is mere Peevishness and Perverseness, not Religion. Some absent themselves from these Churches from a Dislike to the Formalities, and make their Religion consist in having no publick Worship; and I fear I might have justly said, in having no Religion. Others from their Averseness to the receiv'd Forms and Ceremonies of the Church, and Fashions of the World, are in reality the most formal of all, and make it essential to Religion to dress and act in every thing different from other People. Others again disown external Forms of Worship, merely because they will, and almost place their Religion in opposing and crying them down. Some, it's true, do with constant and with seeming Devotion frequent some separate Congregation at all times of publick Worship, especially on the Lord's Day, which they take care to keep very strictly at their own Houses too; but this is only Formality, and observing Times and Seasons, in all such as take the liberty, thro the rest of the whole Week, to cheat, and undermine, and deceive, or to over-reach their Neighbours. And it must not be dissembled, that thro the prodigious Corruption of the Age, base Vices *commonly* prevail under the Names and Cover of Virtues; and the grossest Acts of Barbarity, Violence, and Injustice are called at least, but if Men would reason they could never be thought to be, Justice and Religion. These things are not only chargeable upon the openly profane

ſane and profligate, but even to a great degree upon too many who deceive the World and themſelves, by ſome external Performances of one kind or other; their Zeal for which, helps them to paſs for religious Men. It concerns us all therefore to examine even our ſelves, and ſee whether any of us be not of this number. Our Saviour had but twelve Apoſtles, and one of them was a *Judas*; ſo it's *poſſible*, and may be fear'd, that there may be ſome among us, but I hope very few, who reſt in the Externals of Religion, without having a due regard to that Purity of Heart which is alone neceſſary to denominate us truly religious. And if we are (as indeed all ought to be) careful to preſerve a good Appearance and Deportment among Men, adorning the Doctrine of God our Saviour, and diligent in the Performance of all the outward Parts of Religion; very ſtrict in regulating all theſe things according to the Scriptures only, without owning any other Authority upon Earth; and as zealous in maintaining their Chriſtian Liberty, againſt all the Attempts of Superſtition, Tyranny, and Prieſtcraft: If we reject the Forms and Impoſitions of others, to uſe a more ſimple and plain, and let me add Primitive and Apoſtolick, way of worſhipping God: If we are ſo happy as to have reviv'd, and maintain'd, and practis'd the true antient way of adminiſtring Baptiſm and the Lord's Supper, according to our Lord's own Inſtitution and Appointment, free from thoſe groſs Corruptions which alter and deſtroy their very Nature: If after all, we reſt here, and are covetous, unmerciful, not forgiving Injuries or Debtors, under the notion of demanding our Right, and doing our ſelves Juſtice; griping and oppreſſing the Poor in our Dealing with them, under pretence that it's every one's Buſineſs in Bargaining and Trade to do the beſt he can for himſelf, and conſider his own Intereſt only: If we make no Conſcience of injuring our Neighbour by open Calumny and Reproach, or by ſecret Whiſperings and Backbitings, or ſcandalous and malicious

Surmiſes

Surmiſes and Miſrepreſentations, by Cenſoriouſneſs and all manner of private Injuries: If this be the Caſe of any, what ſuch call Religion is abominable Hypocriſy. And it is evident to Demonſtration, that they lay too much ſtreſs on, and place the whole of their Religion in thoſe things wherein they differ from others: for ſuch as are only zealous in the point of Baptiſm, for inſtance, or a Set of ſpeculative Opinions, muſt think theſe are the Subſtance of Religion, or elſe that theſe will atone for the want of every thing elſe.

But to proceed yet further: I fear there is too much reaſon to ſuſpect that ſome who are accounted pious good Men, and are indeed careful to perform many Parts of external Religion and Devotion, and divers Acts of Charity and Beneficence; diligent to do many Parts of their Duty to God and their Neighbour; who laying too great ſtreſs upon theſe things, fall yet far ſhort of Religion: for are not ſome, even of theſe Men, proud, and haughty, and inſolent, letting looſe the Reins to their Paſſion and Revenge, which they likewiſe run into many times for very Trifles? Are not ſome of theſe Men very earneſt in the purſuit of the World and the Advantages thereof, guilty of Extortion, and greedy to take all Advantages of thoſe they deal with, and that in pure Wantonneſs or Covetouſneſs, not out of the neceſſity of their own Circumſtances? And don't they frequently from thence run themſelves into the Guilt of defrauding, tricking, and undermining thoſe about them; and to gain their End, and increaſe their Store, uſe all the little Artifices and ungenerous mean Actions, which paſs commonly for Shrewdneſs, Cunning, and good Management, and the like Virtues, in the eyes of the *Children of this World?* which, however, are look'd on with Scorn, and Contempt, and Abhorrence by the wiſer *Children of Light*, who plainly ſee that all theſe things are highly diſpleaſing to the God of Holineſs and Purity, and greatly below and inconſiſtent with the Dignity of Human Nature.

IT may perhaps seem too harsh to some of those who are within the reach of my Charge, that I have laid it so general; but Men must not be flatter'd and sooth'd into their own Ruin from this Place. What I have said is so generally true, that I doubt not but most, upon cool Recollection, will find many Instances within their own Knowledge; for, God knows, the Forms of Godliness, of one kind or other, have almost destroy'd the Life and Power of it. This is the Case in fact, and it is in vain to deny that Christians, of all Sects and Parties, too generally depend upon external Performances alone, and commonly lay a greater stress upon those Particulars wherein they differ from others; upon some darling Practice, or Notion, or Scheme of Principles; than upon the more substantial Parts of Religion: and then are very apt to glory with the *Pharisee* in the Gospel, Luke xviii. 11, 12. *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other Men are, Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers, or even as this Publican: I fast twice in the Week, I give Tythes of all that I possess.* But God grant that none of us may be led into Destruction by this *Pharisaical* Spirit and Disposition of Mind; let us not deceive our selves, and hazard our Souls upon the most diligent Performances of the ceremonious and external Parts of Religion.

'TIS easy to impose upon our selves in this matter; let us therefore use the utmost Caution and Diligence in trying, and examining, and purifying our own Hearts, which will always lie open to the view of that God with whom we have to do: *And if we have forgotten the Name of our God, or stretched out our Hands to a strange God, shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the Secrets of our Hearts:* Psal. xliv. 20, 21. Let us therefore take the Advice of holy *David* to his Son *Solomon*; 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. *And thou* Solomon, *my Son, know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind: for the Lord searcheth all Hearts, and understandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts; if thou seek him, he will be*

be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. And this seeking God consists in the serving him with a *perfect Heart* and a willing Mind, without which all other things are wholly useless and insignificant; as I am now, in the second place, to shew you. For,

II. My second general Head was to prove the Truth of the Observation I had laid down, in these words; *That the most diligent and punctual Performance of the positive Institutions and external Parts of Religion, be they otherwise ever so necessary and useful, are altogether useless and insignificant, without a sutable inward Disposition, and Purity of Heart and Mind.* And here a very wide Scene of Discourse opens to our view: For this Position may be very largely prov'd and establish'd both from the most clear and certain Principles of Natural Reason, and by very plain and numerous Testimonies of the highest and most undoubted Authority; namely, the Sacred Scriptures.

Religion is not a thing merely positive, or a matter of Institution and Command only; but is founded in the Nature and Reason of Things, and arises purely and necessarily from the Nature of God and his Creatures, and their Relation to him and to one another.

Religion strictly and abstractedly, and in the very notion of the word, signifies the Obligations of Duty we lie under towards God our Creator and Preserver. As it is in us, it is nothing else but a due sense of those Obligations; and without us, in Society, it comprehends, or rather consists in, all those Actions and religious Performances which are the external Signs and Demonstrations of, and do naturally arise from, this internal Sense in our own Minds of the Obligations we lie under. And upon a due Consideration, it will very evidently appear, that the whole efficacy of all these external Performances depends entirely upon the internal Disposi-

tion of our Minds, which alone can render them of any value, and acceptable to God.

GOD is a Being, beyond Imagination, great and glorious, and poſſeſs'd of all Perfections and Excellencies. Hence we are indiſpenſably oblig'd, in point of Truth and Juſtice, to acknowledge and own that he is poſſeſs'd of theſe Perfections; that he is eternal, ſelf-exiſtent, infinite, and immenſe, filling up all Time and all Space, in the full and compleat Enjoyment of all Bleſſedneſs, and Power, and Wiſdom, and Majeſty. And as he is the great Creator and Governour of the Univerſe; as we are the Work of his Hands, and receive our Beings, with all our Faculties and Enjoyments, from the inexhauſtible Source of his Bounty and Goodneſs; hence ariſe all our relative Obligations to him, as our Creator, and Preſerver, and Benefactor. Thus it appears, that theſe are the Foundations of Religion; and when they take place, and have their proper influence upon us by Conſideration and Reflection, they do of courſe produce in us a due Senſe of theſe Obligations; and when we think and act according thereunto, we are ſaid to be religious. Religion therefore is in us the making good the Obligations under which we lie towards God, entertaining very great and awful Apprehenſions of his Divine Majeſty, bowing our Souls with all Humility before him, and ſubmitting our ſelves, our Will, and all our Thoughts entirely to his Will and Good-pleaſure; from the bottom of our Souls adoring and praiſing his reverend and glorious Name, owning and magnifying his Power and Wiſdom, acknowledging the ſuperiour Excellence of his Nature, and the full Perfection of all his Attributes: in theſe things conſiſts all true and acceptable Religion. But that which is commonly call'd external, namely all outward Actions, are but the Signs and Pictures of this; and from this they muſt ariſe, and only in proportion as they do ſo, they are, or can be, well-pleaſing to God.

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CONSIDER'D in themselves and abstractedly, they are nothing but the mere Effects of senseless Matter and Motion; and thus they are destitute of all moral or religious Good or Evil, and therefore are altogether insignificant in point of Religion: But then if consider'd as caus'd and produc'd voluntarily, by a self-conscious and self-moving Power, with certain Views or Designs; so far they become, or I should rather say are denominated, virtuous or vicious, according to the Rectitude or Depravity of the internal Designs and Intentions of the Mind from whence they arise. As therefore outward Actions are denominated morally good, only from their Conformity to, or as they arise from the good Dispositions and Motions of the Mind; so likewise they can be denominated religious upon no other account, than as they arise from the religious Motions and Dispositions of the Soul.

AND from the whole therefore it follows, that in strictness all our outward Actions and Performances have nothing commendable or rewardable in them, but will be judg'd of only by the Purity of our Hearts, and the Sincerity of our Intentions. And therefore without this Purity of Heart, be our outward Performances what they will, they are but the Form of Godliness, without the Substance and Power of it, and can stand us in no stead. And this the Scriptures do very largely set forth in divers Forms of speaking: Thus *David* frequently talks of the *Upright in Heart, a clean Heart, a perfect Heart*, and the like, making these the necessary Conditions of obtaining the Favour of God: *My Defence* (says he, *Psal.* vii. 10.) *is of God, who saveth the Upright in Heart:* And *Psal.* lxxiii. 1. *Truly God is good to* Israel, *even to such*, i. e. to such only, *as are of a clean Heart*; and therefore he prays, *Psal.* li. 10. *Create in me a clean Heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me:* plainly implying, that all his Exactness in the Externals of Religion, was insufficient to recommend him to God's Favour: They bear the same

ſame Relation to the internal Motions of our Mind, as our Words do to our Thoughts; and as theſe are of no uſe or ſignificancy without ſome certain Senſe affix'd to them, ſo neither are our Actions, any otherwiſe than as they are the Pictures of our Minds, and ſerve to diſcover and expreſs their internal Senſe and Diſpoſition. To the ſame purpoſe likewiſe are a great number of Paſſages in the New Teſtament. One of the Complaints St. *Peter* makes againſt ſome who went for Chriſtians in his time, was, that they had Hearts *exerciſed with covetous Practices*; 2 Pet. ii. 14. upon which, notwithſtanding all their outward Compliances, he calls them *curſed Children*, and ſays, they *ſhall receive the Reward of Unrighteouſneſs*, ver. 13. And St. *Paul*, in his Advice to Servants, *Eph.* vi. 5,6. gives them to know, that it is not enough barely to obey their Maſters, and perform the external Parts of their Duty; that they ought by no means to imagine that is all that's expected of them: but, ſays he, *Servants be obedient unto them that are your Maſters according to the Fleſh, with Fear and Trembling, in Singleneſs of Heart, as unto Chriſt; not with Eye-Service, but as the Servants of Chriſt, doing the Will of God from the Heart.* And he repeats it again, *Col.* iii. 22.

AND God himſelf likewiſe, by the Mouth of the Prophet *Iſaiah*, cap. xxix. ver. 13. denounces ſevere Judgments againſt the formal *Jews* of that time, who like thoſe in our Saviour's days, to whom *He* applies the Words of the Prophecy, were indeed very exact in performing all the Ceremonies of the Law, and in keeping the Traditions of the Elders; but were yet very far from diſcharging their Duty, becauſe *this People*, ſaith the Lord, *draw near me with their Mouth, and with their Lips do honour me, but have removed their Heart far from me:* and for this reaſon God rejected all their Services. And to mention at preſent but one Paſſage more; our Lord, to that Queſtion, Which is the great Commandment of the Law? *Mat.* xxii. 36. anſwers, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thine Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind:*

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This is the first and great Commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self: and then adds, *On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets:* directly placing the whole Substance, and Power, and Efficacy of Religion in the Heart; for if all the Duties enjoin'd by God and Nature depend, as Christ assures us they do, upon the Dispositions of the Heart, then the Purity of the Heart only can render all our other Performances pure and acceptable before God.

THUS then it abundantly appears from these things, that nothing is acceptable to God but the Heart, and the Services which flow from thence. But not content to have shewn this in general, I will proceed to make it out yet more particularly of each kind of religious Actions; which may be well enough reduced to these three: 1. Human Inventions and Impositions. 2. Divine positive Institutions. And, 3. Moral Actions, such as all Works of Justice, Charity, and Beneficence, *&c.* which are commonly said to be good in their own nature. My Observation holds equally true of all these; for Purity of Heart only, and not any or all of these can recommend us to the Favour of God.

1. As to all human Inventions and Impositions; they being only founded on the arbitrary Will of Superiors, or our own mutual Agreement and Consent, and enforc'd only by temporal Penalties, they are of mere human Obligation, and our Obedience is only to human Authority, and shall be rewarded only with human and temporal Advantages. As they are not appointed before God, we don't know whether they are acceptable to him, and therefore we don't perform them in obedience to him, and to please him; which yet is essentially necessary to render our Actions religious and rewardable by God: for, as I have noted before, all religious Actions, which are truly such, must spring from a Sense of our Obligations to God, arising from his excellent Nature, and our Relation to him. But now how are

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we under any Obligations of this nature to perform the unaccountably wild Impositions of the Church of *Rome*, or the Rites and Ceremonies required by any other Church whatever?

THE Constitution, Discipline, and Orders of the Church; the uninterrupted Succession of a Regular, Legal, Episcopal Ministry; the Rights, Powers and Privileges of the Clergy; the Sacredness of their Persons and Characters; Articles, Confessions of Faith, and particular Sets of Opinions; are things which make a mighty noise at present, and fill the Mouths, and engage all the Zeal of many. But after all, what Foundation have any of these things in the Nature or Word of God? And what ground have we to expect that our Zeal for these things will recommend us to God? 'Tis not a Zeal for God, but for the Inventions of Man's Wisdom, and can therefore entitle only to the Favour and Acceptance of Men; and nothing but a real and true Obedience to God shall be bountifully rewarded by him in everlasting Mansions of Glory.

THE *Jews* were very apt, if threatned with, or already fallen under any Calamity, to rend their Clothes, and mourn in Sackcloth and Ashes, according to the Custom of their Country and Time; and fondly imagin'd by these human Inventions to turn away the Wrath of the Almighty: but he by the Prophet *Joel*, ch. ii. ver. 12. declares against all such Services, saying, *Turn to me with all your Heart* —— *and rend your Heart and not your Garments.* And in *Isaiah*, ch. xxix. ver. 13. he complains that *their Fear towards him was taught by the Precepts of Men.*

OUR Saviour likewise severely reproves the *Pharisees* for their fond Attachment to the Inventions and Traditions of the Elders, which he declares render'd *the Word of God of none effect*, Mark vii. 13. and thereupon assures them, that it was *in vain they did worship God, teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men, ver.* 7. These very full and plain Declarations, one would think, should abate much of the Heat and Zeal

too

too commonly ſhewn for human Inventions; under which Denomination come all thoſe things which are made Boundaries and Conditions of Communion, whether by thoſe in Authority, or by National Churches, or by particular Churches and private Perſons, and which the Scriptures have not made ſo. All theſe unwarrantable Impoſitions are of the ſame evil Nature and Tendency, and do generally equally render *the Word of God of no effect*. But,

2. The poſitive Inſtitutions, which bear the Impreſſions of Divine Authority, are likewiſe inſufficient to recommend us to the Favour of God: the moſt ſtrict and punctual external Performance of them being not enough to denominate us religious; for they are not Religion, nor any ways allied to it. It is ſuppoſed, from the very nature of them, that they have no intrinſick Value, and that they are not good or obligatory in themſelves before their Inſtitution. But now if poſitive Inſtitutions are only good, becauſe commanded by a ſufficient Authority, then, to render them of any uſe and ſervice to us, they muſt be perform'd from a due Senſe of the Authority of the Impoſer, and purely with a View to obey and pleaſe him; and ſo far only as this is done, is any Action good, religious, acceptable to God, and rewardable by him. And this the Scriptures teach us very largely: Our Saviour very expreſly determines this in direct oppoſition to all the Rites and Ceremonies of the Law; *John* iv. 21. *Believe me, the hour cometh when ye ſhall neither in this Mountain, nor yet at* Jeruſalem, *worſhip the Father*. Ver. 23. *But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true Worſhippers ſhall worſhip the Father in Spirit and in Truth*. Ver. 24. *God is a Spirit, and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth*; without which all their Legal Obſervances ſignify nothing. And St. *Paul*, *Rom.* ii. 28. declares, *That he is not a* Jew, *who is one outwardly*, by obſerving the Ceremonies of the Law; *but he is a* Jew, *who is one inwardly: and Circumciſion is that of the Heart in the Spirit*. External Circumciſion therefore,

tho appointed by God himself (and the same may be said of all other external Ordinances) can be of no use and advantage to any without a suitable Disposition of Heart and Mind: *For*, as the same Apostle says, *Gal.* v. 6. *Neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but Faith which works by Love.* And tho the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* were noted for the most exact and punctual Performance of the Externals of Religion, yet they are frequently in the Gospels condemn'd by our Saviour. There are a great many Rules given in the Books of the Law concerning Sacrifices, which are very strictly required at the hands of the *Jews*; and yet for want of a suitable Disposition of Soul, God, with Vehemence and Anger, refuses to accept of their Offerings, tho made according to his own Command in all Externals: *Isa.* i. 11. *To what purpose is the multitude of your Sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of the Burnt-Offerings of Rams, and the Fat of fed Beasts; I delight not in the Blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of He-Goats: When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands, to tread my Courts? Bring no more vain Oblations, Incense is an Abomination unto me; your new Moons, and your appointed Feasts, my Soul hateth: They are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them.* And again, *Chap.* lvi. *ver.* 2. *But to this Man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my Word. He that killeth an Ox, is as if he slew a Man; he that sacrificeth a Lamb, as if he cut off a Dog's Neck; he that offereth an Oblation, as if he offer'd Swines Blood; he that burneth Incense, as if he blessed an Idol.* And yet all these are things of God's own Appointment and Institution, but manifestly declar'd to be insignificant, or, I should rather say, to be Sins and Abominations to the Lord, when not attended with, and flowing from a pure Heart. And the Case is exactly the same in the Nature and Reason of the thing, as to all Gospel-Ordinances: and therefore it is made a Recommendation of Gospel-Obedience, that it was from the Heart; *Rom.* vi. 17. *God be thanked, that tho ye*

were

were the Servants of Sin, ye have now obey'd from the Heart that Form of Doctrine which was deliver'd to you. Accordingly our Saviour himself expresly cautions us, *Mat.* vii. 22. and *Luke* xiii. 26. that *many* shall depend upon, and trust to their external Performances, and be able to *say in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesy'd in thy Name? and in thy Name cast out Devils? and in thy Name done many wonderful Works? We have eaten and drank in thy Presence, and thou hast taught in our Streets:* And yet to these very Men, who have gone so far, and done so much, he hath assur'd us he will return that dreadful Answer, *I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work Iniquity.* This sure must pierce every one of us to the heart, and put us upon making a very diligent Enquiry, to see that we be not of this unhappy number: For from the whole it very plainly appears, that God Almighty rejects and abhors his *own Ordinances,* when they are polluted and defiled, by being perform'd with an impure Heart; and therefore the most strict Observance of these things will be of no service to us without *Purity of Heart.*

3. Nay, to come to the third and last Particular, even those Moral Actions, which are commonly said to be good in their own nature, and do indeed arise necessarily out of the nature of things, and do carry in them a Decency and Suitableness founded in the eternal unalterable Principles of Reason; such are all external Acts of natural Religion, of Justice, Charity, and mutual Beneficence; *i.e.* all the natural Duties to God, our Neighbour, and our selves, which are to be express'd by any external Actions: even all these, without a right Frame of Spirit and Disposition of Heart, are useless and insignificant, and void of all real Goodness. What signify all the most fervent Expressions in Brayer without the Heart? seeing we are assur'd, 1 *Sam.* xvi. 7. *that the Lord seeth not as Man seeth, for Man looketh on the outward Appearance, but the Lord looketh on the Heart:* without which all our Prayers and most solemn Services are

an Abomination to him. *Prov.* xxviii. 9. *He that turneth away his Ear from hearing the Law, even his Prayer shall be Abomination*; and, as *David* expresses it, *Psal.* cix. 7. *become Sin.* So perfectly indifferent are all our Actions strictly in themselves, and such great Influence has the Temper and Disposition of our Hearts over them, as to make the very same Action virtuous or vicious, the commendable Discharge of our Duty, or a heinous Sin against it. What signifies then the deceitful Worship, and all the external noisy, showy Performances, and Compliances of the Hypocrite, whose *Hope shall perish, and the Congregation of Hypocrites shall be desolate*, Job viii. 13. & xv. 34. Such as make their Prayers to God, whether *extempore*, or in a conceiv'd Form, purely to be seen of Men; or who lengthen them out with vain Babblings, and idle frivolous Petitions, thinking to be heard for their much speaking, (*Mat.* vi. 7.) our Saviour tells us have their Reward, and are not to expect any from his Father. All Acts of Piety and Devotion, perform'd merely from Custom or Habit, out of any View to please Men, to obtain or confirm our Reputation, or to serve some temporal Interest, or gratify some Passion or Inclination, or from any other such poor, mean, selfish Motives, are of no value in the sight of God, nor will be of any service to us.

BUT I cannot enlarge so much upon this Head as I at first intended, and therefore shall only add here those very remarkable words of the Apostle, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 1, 2, 3. which are very apposite to our present purpose: *Tho I speak with the Tongues*, says he, *of Men and Angels*——*and tho I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries and all Knowledge*, and am right in all my Notions; *and tho I have all Faith*, even in the highest degree, *so as that I could remove Mountains*——*tho I* have the utmost Liberality and Good-Nature, and *bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor*; nay, *and tho I* am so very zealous for the Gospel, that I should *give my* very *Body to be burned alive, and have not Charity*, all these things shall profit *me nothing.*

thing. 'Tis not therefore the bare doing these things, but the purifying our Hearts only, that will make all our other Services acceptable, and recommend us to the Favour of God, according to our Saviour's Declaration in our Text, *Blessed are the pure in Heart.*

I CAN'T well be misunderstood in what I have been saying, and therefore perhaps need not say any thing here by way of Caution; however it can't be amiss just to add, that I don't mean, by any thing I have said, to represent external Religion as utterly useless, and to be neglected by us: *As the Body without the Spirit is dead, so Faith without Works is dead also*; Jam. ii. 26. All our religious Actions and Services are indeed insipid and lifeless, without Purity of Heart; but then this active vital Principle of Religion cannot be hid under a Bushel, but will break out like the Sun thro a Cloud, and shine gloriously in the whole course of our Lives, and beautify all our Actions: without this none of our Actions are religious, but with it they all become *Sacrifices holy, and acceptable unto God*; and where it finds place, it will exert it self irresistibly in a universal Obedience to the Laws of God and Nature: and by this alone may we judge whether this powerful sanctifying Principle be in us or not, which it very much concerns us to know.

BUT to conclude, I will only just add, that 'tis natural to make the following Inferences from what has been said; namely,

(1.) IF these external Parts of Religion are so insignificant in themselves, without being sanctify'd by a pure Heart, 'tis the most egregious Folly in those who make such a mighty stir about the lowest and meanest of these things, *viz.* human Ceremonies and Impositions, as if they were the very Life and Soul of all Religion: And 'twill be a sad Disappointment to these Men at last, to find all that mighty stock of Zeal, they expended on any or all of these, vanish away like Smoke, and come to nothing; and that all their Pains and Labour, from which they hoped for

for so much, is utterly lost, and can entitle them to no Reward: And this will certainly be the Case.

(2.) In the second place therefore, let us from hence learn to be *wise unto that which is good*, (Rom. xvi. 19.) and with all Diligence purify our Hearts, and then our Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. Let us not rest satisfy'd with joining our selves to any particular Church, or think it enough to espouse with some warmth any particular Opinion or Practice; remembring the *Pharisee* in the Gospel, *Luke* xviii. 11, 12. could boast, that he was *not as other Men are, Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers*, and the like. The *Pharisees* in general were very exact in observing all the Externals of Religion, but yet were not accepted with God. It is not enough to make a publick Profession of Religion, or to subscribe certain Articles of Faith, or the like: *And if ye love them which love you, what Reward have you? If ye salute your Brethren only, what do ye more than others? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect*, (Mat. v. 46, 47, 48.) *For I say unto you*, by Authority from the Son of God himself, *that except your Righteousness exceed the Righteousness of the* Scribes *and* Pharisees, *ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, (Mat. v. 20.) But *blessed are the Pure in Heart, for they shall see God.*

FINIS.

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